

# ***The Bible:***

## ***An Introductory Overview***

### **I. What Is the Bible?**

The Holy Bible is the world's best-selling book of all time. It is a collection of **66 Books**, which were written by nearly **40 human authors**, spanning some **1,600 years**. The word "Bible" is derived from the Greek word "**biblia**," which when translated means "books." It tells one never-ending story of God's love and redemption of His entire creation from the beginning to the end.

### **II. Who Wrote the Bible**

The Bible is both human and divine in its origin. The human authors—shepherds, kings, prophets, fishermen, and others—were inspired by God so that, while preserving each author's personality and vocabulary, every word is exactly as God would have it. As *The Baptist Faith & Message* states, "It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction . . . without any mixture of error" (Article 1).

### **III. Why Was the Bible Written?**

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. Knowing this, when reading the Bible, our ultimate goal should be to grow in our knowledge of God (as opposed to finding answers or solving theological problems). In addition to revealing the nature and identity of God, the Bible contains everything necessary concerning religious doctrine and moral conduct. Therefore, it is the standard by which all our beliefs and behaviors are judged. *The Baptist Faith and Message* sums it up thusly: "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation" (Article 1).

### **IV. How Was It Arranged?**

The books of Scripture are not arranged chronologically, nor are all the events recorded in individual books necessarily in chronological order. Although the opening book details the creation and the final book describes the end of time, the other books of Scripture do not necessarily follow this same pattern. Rather, the Bible is arranged within the testaments, according to certain categories. The following is a popular listing of the categorization of the 66 books of Scripture:

<b><u>Old Testament</u></b>	(before the birth of Christ)
<b><u>Pentateuch, Law:</u></b>	Genesis – Deuteronomy
<b><u>History:</u></b>	Joshua – Job
<b><u>Writings (Poetry &amp; Wisdom):</u></b>	Psalms – Song of Solomon
<b><u>Prophets:</u></b>	
<b><u>Major Prophets:</u></b>	Isaiah – Daniel
<b><u>Minor Prophets:</u></b>	Hosea – Malachi
<b><u>New Testament</u></b>	(beginning with the birth of Christ)
<b><u>Gospels:</u></b>	Matthew – John
<b><u>History:</u></b>	Acts
<b><u>Epistles (letters):</u></b>	
<b><u>Pauline Epistles:</u></b>	Romans – Philemon
<b><u>General Epistles:</u></b>	Hebrews – Jude
<b><u>Prophecy/ Apocalyptic:</u></b>	Revelation

# *The Canon of Holy Scripture*

## **I. What Is the Canon?**

*The “canon” is the accepted and fixed writings of Scripture. The term “canon” is Greek for “reed.” Reeds were common tools used for making standard measurements. Thus, canonization is the process by which ancient writings were carefully examined, prayed over, and finally recognized as worthy, or measuring up to the standard, of being labeled as Holy Scripture.*

## **II. How Was the Canon Established?**

*The fixed canon of Scripture was not merely decided upon in a moment by a group of people. Certain historical writings over time gained acceptance by the communities of faith to whom, or by whom, they were written. The fixed canon of Christian Scripture is divided into two testaments: the Old Testament and the New Testament.*

### **A. The Old Testament Canon**

*The Old Testament is comprised of writings deemed worthy by ancient Jewish scholars and leaders. Old Testament books combine to tell the story of God’s covenant relationship with the Jewish nation. These books contain history, poetry, prophecy, and other literary styles. They were written by numerous authors spanning 1400+ years. It is believed that by 100 B.C. Jewish scholars had accepted as Scripture the same 39 books confirmed by Protestant Christianity as the Old Testament canon of Scripture.*

### **B. The New Testament Canon**

*The New Testament canonization process is easier to trace historically. Following the ascension of Jesus, the apostles faced the task of sharing the Gospel message with the entire world. The early church was influenced by the writings of the apostles and others. Eventually, varying teachings and movements began to cause division. Church leaders faced the task of deciding which writings should be accepted as Holy Scripture. This process involved many gatherings and much prayer. The following questions are guidelines used in deciding upon the 27 New Testament Books of Holy Scripture:*

- 1. Does the entire “Community of Faith” accept its content?*
- 2. Does the entire “Community of Faith” find it helpful for life?*
- 3. Does the “Community of Faith” hear/ see God in its pages?*
- 4. Is the writing connected directly to a confirmed apostle?*
- 5. Is the writing God-Breathed? (inspired by God)*

## **III. What Is the Apocrypha?**

*“Apocrypha” is a Latin term meaning “hidden.” Most often the term refers to additional books in the Roman Catholic Bible. The Hebrew Bible did not include them; however, the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) did additionally include them to the Old Testament. The first Latin Bible (Vulgate) was translated from the Septuagint and so includes these books. Later translations used the Hebrew canon as their source which caused the Apocrypha to appear suspect. With the Reformation, the accepted Protestant translations of Scripture excluded the Apocrypha for its lack of qualification for canonization.*

## **IV. How Do We Have Chapters and Verses?**

*While Scripture is infallible, the same claim is not made concerning the division of “chapters” and “verses.” These divisions more or less evolved over time. Old Testament chapter divisions first appeared in page margins in 1330 B.C. Verses were not standardized until 900 A.D. New Testament chapters appeared in 1227 A.D. Verses did not appear until the 16th Century.*

# *The Protestant Canon: The Old Testament*

<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Nehemiah</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>Esther</i>	<i>Joel</i>
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Amos</i>
<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>Obadiah</i>
<i>Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>Jonah</i>
<i>Joshua</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	<i>Micah</i>
<i>Judges</i>	<i>Song of Solomon</i>	<i>Nahum</i>
<i>Ruth</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>	<i>Habakkuk</i>
<i>1-2 Samuel</i>	<i>Jeremiah</i>	<i>Zephaniah</i>
<i>1-2 Kings</i>	<i>Lamentations</i>	<i>Haggai</i>
<i>1-2 Chronicles</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>	<i>Zechariah</i>
<i>Ezra</i>	<i>Daniel</i>	<i>Malachi</i>

## History of Translation of the Old Testament

The ancient stories of faith were originally passed down through oral tradition until written languages emerged. Among early human civilizations, the personal sharing of one's faith was most essential in securing the purity of religion and faith. Adam instructed Eve in the ways of godliness. As parents they both were to instruct their children. This formula of generational instruction in righteousness is displayed in Deuteronomy 6.

The writings of the Old Testament were originally in Hebrew and Aramaic. Through the centuries, Scripture was translated to numerous languages. The following is a list of some historical translations of Scripture:

**The Septuagint** is the Greek translation of the OT 250—100 BC

**The Vulgate** is the Latin translation of the OT 400 AD

**King James Version** is an English translation of Scripture 1611 AD

*There are numerous other translations into countless languages.*

*Those listed above are some that are more notable and applicable to the Western Church*

# *The Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Overview*

## **I. Torah** "Law" or "Instruction"

AKA the Pentateuch— first 5 books of Scripture

**Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**

Believed by most to have been written by Moses

Contains Principles to Guide Life's Relationships:

**Man <—> Man & Man <—> God**

## **II. Nevi'im** "Prophets"

Comprised of the Former Prophets:

**Joshua, Judges, Samuel, The Book of the Kings**

Comprised of the Latter Prophets:

**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, The Book of the 12**

## **III. Kethuvim** "Writings"

Contains the Following Writings:

**Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles**

Also Contains the Megilloth— "Festival Writings"

**Ruth & Esther** Pentecost

**Song of Solomon** Song of Solomon

**Ecclesiastes** Feast of Tabernacles

**Lamentations** Ninth of Ab

- **The Protestant Bible contains 39 O.T. Books**
- **The Hebrew Bible contains 24 Books** (*Listed Above*)  
The books of Samuel, Kings, & Chronicles are combined  
The Minor Prophets are grouped to one Book of the 12  
The Hebrew Bible appears in reverse order
- **Dates of Official Recognition as Fixed Canon**  
The **Torah** became fixed canon by 400 BC  
The **Nevi'im** became fixed canon by 200 BC  
The **Kethuvim** became fixed canon by 100 BC

# ***The Protestant Canon: The New Testament***

<i><b>Matthew</b></i>	<i><b>Ephesians</b></i>	<i><b>Hebrews</b></i>
<i><b>Mark</b></i>	<i><b>Philippians</b></i>	<i><b>James</b></i>
<i><b>Luke</b></i>	<i><b>Colossians</b></i>	<i><b>1 Peter</b></i>
<i><b>John</b></i>	<i><b>1 Thessalonians</b></i>	<i><b>2 Peter</b></i>
<i><b>Acts</b></i>	<i><b>2 Thessalonians</b></i>	<i><b>1 John</b></i>
<i><b>Romans</b></i>	<i><b>1 Timothy</b></i>	<i><b>2 John</b></i>
<i><b>1 Corinthians</b></i>	<i><b>2 Timothy</b></i>	<i><b>3 John</b></i>
<i><b>2 Corinthians</b></i>	<i><b>Titus</b></i>	<i><b>Jude</b></i>
<i><b>Galatians</b></i>	<i><b>Philemon</b></i>	<i><b>Revelation</b></i>

## **What Is the New Testament?**

*In terms of chronology, the New Testament begins with the events surrounding the announcement of the birth of Jesus and ends with a prophecy foretelling the end of time. The New Testament of Scripture presents Jesus as the Messiah, the long-awaited, complete fulfillment of the events and prophecies from the Old Testament for the redemption of God's people.*

## **Why Was the New Testament Written?**

*When reading the New Testament the goal should be to understand how Christ is the supreme fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of mankind from sin and its eternal effects. The New Testament neither contradicts nor abolishes Old Testament Scripture. Rather, it reveals the connection between the forward-looking faith of those who trusted God to provide a Messiah and the faith of those who now understand Jesus to be that Messiah.*

## **The Gospels:** (Matthew —John)

*The first four New Testament books discuss the life of Jesus from the announcement of His birth through His death and resurrection culminating with His ascension to Heaven to rule with God. Each book is written from the perspective of a different human author. The first three gospels are known as the "Synoptic Gospels" because they contain some of the same stories, often following the same sequences. "Synoptic" is a Greek term meaning "seen together." John's gospel is set apart from the others due to its obvious stylistic differences.*

## **The History of the Early Church:** (Acts)

*The book of Acts is stylistically similar to the Gospels in that it is an historical account of the major events of the early Christian church following Christ's ascension. Some literary classification systems include Acts along with the Gospels in one "History" category rather than separating them.*

## **The Epistles:** (Romans—Jude)

*An "epistle" is a writing directed toward a person or group of people. The New Testament Epistles are generally divided into two categories: Pauline and General. The Apostle Paul is commonly credited as having written the epistles from Romans through Philemon. The eight remaining epistles are referred to as General because of their varying authorship and covering over a variety of subjects relating to church life.*

## **Prophecy:** (Revelation)

*The final book of the New Testament is in a category all its own. Its literary style is reminiscent of that of some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. This style is also referred to as Apocalyptic literature, meaning "unveiling" or "revelation."*